



## NATIONAL SURVEY OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR HOMELESS FAMILIES

**NEW YORK**  
Fall 2010

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from the INSTITUTE FOR CHILDREN, POVERTY, AND HOMELESSNESS

**New York had an estimated 11,402 homeless families on a single night in 2009, with providers serving nearly three times their bed capacity over the course of the year.<sup>1</sup> This brief summarizes some of the state's public and private initiatives to assist these families.**

### State Taskforce on Homelessness

**Taskforce:** New York does not have an active taskforce on homelessness. Assembly Bill A01493 would establish a taskforce on homelessness in each county and is awaiting further action by the state senate.

**Governor's Appointee:** None.



### Demographic Summary and Overview of Regional Organization

	New York <sup>2</sup>	New York City	Suffolk County	Nassau County	Westchester County	Erie County
Persons in homeless families <sup>3</sup>	36,510	31,155	1,407	415	976	233
Number of family shelter beds <sup>4</sup>	39,225	33,534	1,407	451	1,517	373
Persons in homeless families (per 10,000 population in families) <sup>5</sup>	52	104	23	12	12	8
Percent of families in poverty <sup>6</sup>	16.01%	22.39%	5.24%	4.40%	7.99%	17.05%
10-Year plan date approved or implemented	No plan	2004	2002	2008	No plan	2006
10-Year plan target population	No plan	All	All	All	No plan	All
Point-in-time count frequency	Locally managed	Annually	Annually	Annually	Biennially	Annually
Point-in-time count managing agency	Locally managed	New York City Department of Homeless Services	Long Island Coalition for the Homeless	Long Island Coalition for the Homeless	Westchester County Department of Social Services	Homeless Alliance of Western New York
Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) managing agency	Locally managed	New York City Department of Homeless Services	Long Island Coalition for the Homeless	Long Island Coalition for the Homeless	Westchester County Department of Information Technology	Homeless Alliance of Western New York
Main organizing agency or Continuum of Care (CoC) lead applicant	New York Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance	New York City Department of Homeless Services	Long Island Coalition for the Homeless	Long Island Coalition for the Homeless	Westchester County Department of Community Mental Health	Homeless Alliance of Western New York

### Homeless Families Guaranteed Shelter in New York City

New York City is the only jurisdiction in the United States that guarantees the right to shelter for all homeless persons, including families.<sup>7</sup> The city's Department of Homeless Services (DHS) provides shelter through a network of non-profit organizations and for-profit agencies in Tier II emergency and transitional shelters, clustered-site housing, and hotels. In addition to guaranteeing shelter, DHS focuses on diverting families from entering the homeless system through the Homebase program. Since 2006, DHS reports that Homebase has prevented more than 90% of clients experiencing a housing crisis from becoming homeless.<sup>8</sup>

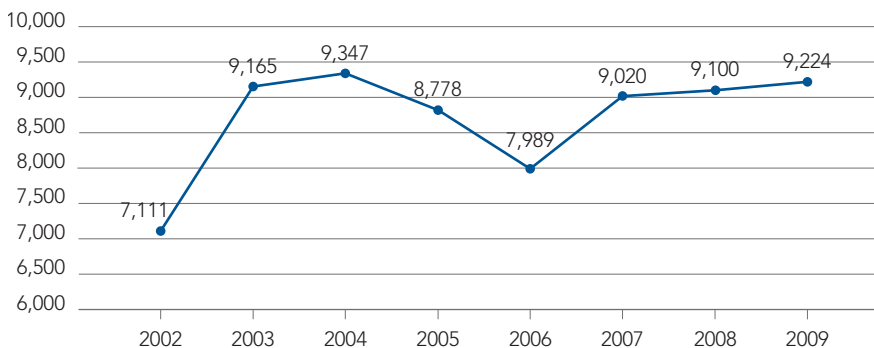
Once in the shelter system, DHS prioritizes the rapid re-housing of shelter clients, currently through the Advantage program. Created in 2007 as Work Advantage, the program originally provided sheltered homeless households

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The *National Survey of Programs and Services for Homeless Families* is an online resource for service providers, advocates, researchers, and public policy makers working in the field of family homelessness. The Web site provides a state-by-state snapshot of the interconnections between governmental and nonprofit work to end family homelessness. For additional information on New York and other states, visit [www.icprwb.org](http://www.icprwb.org)

with a 100% city-funded rental subsidy. The program matched funds for client savings for up to two years if they maintained at least 20 hours of employment per week.<sup>9</sup> Beginning in August 2010, however, the new Advantage program requires that families contribute 30% of their gross monthly income toward rent during the first year of assistance. In addition, to qualify for a second year of support, working heads of household must maintain employment for at least 35 hours per week and pay 40% of their monthly income towards rent.<sup>10</sup> While DHS claims success and a low recidivism rate, Advantage has yet to be proven effective.<sup>11</sup> There is a lack of publicly available information both on the adherence to program requirements and regarding the number of families returning to the city for prevention assistance or shelter after receiving an Advantage subsidy. Notwithstanding, New York City remains the most comprehensive system of shelter and services in the nation.

### Average Number of Families in Shelter on a Single Night in New York City (by fiscal year)



Source: New York City Department of Homeless Services, *Critical Activities Report*, Fiscal Years 2002–09.

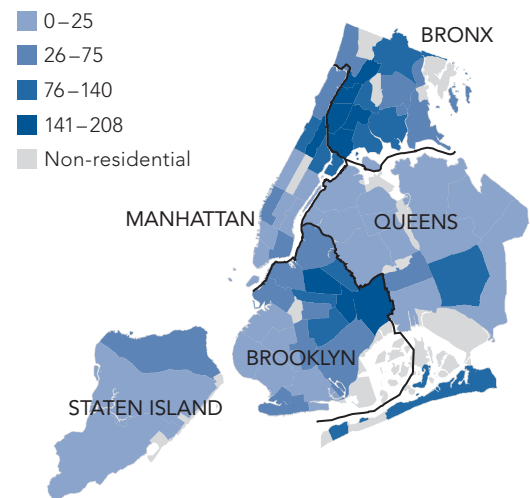
### Working to End Homelessness on Long Island

The Long Island Coalition for the Homeless (LICH) has worked to end homelessness since 1985 and coordinates a network of over 125 agencies that provide services to homeless families and individuals. Formerly the Nassau-Suffolk Coalition for the Homeless, LICH has secured more than \$101 million in federal funding for housing and services since 1996. In addition, LICH advocates for a continuum of housing options, provides cash assistance, focuses on expanding media coverage, and operates an annual conference to engage stakeholders. In recent years, LICH has targeted efforts on the growing number of homeless families and a lack of affordable housing.<sup>12</sup>

### Experiencing Poverty and Homelessness in Buffalo

Each year, the Homeless Alliance of Western New York—the main coordinating agency for homeless advocacy and funding in the Erie County region—hosts the Poverty Challenge, a week-long event that requires participants to live on a low-income budget. In an area with a high family poverty rate (25% in the City of Buffalo), the experience uses critical thinking exercises to discover the difference between minimum- and living-wage budgets and examine the connection between poverty and homelessness. The roughly 100 annual participants—primarily elected officials and leaders from non-profit organizations and businesses—often become more involved in community outreach and advocacy after participating.<sup>13</sup>

### Percent of Families Entering Homeless Shelters in New York City (per 10,000 families by community district)



Source: Citizens' Committee for Children of New York, *Keeping Track of New York City's Children* (New York, 2010); U.S. Census Bureau, 2006–2008 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates.

### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *HUD's 2009 CoC Homeless Assistance Programs—Homeless Populations and Subpopulations*; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *AHAR Exchange Public Reports: 2009 Comprehensive Report of Sheltered Homeless Persons*.
- <sup>2</sup> Statistics for New York State exclude Chenango, Cortland, Delaware, Essex, Herkimer, Livingston, Madison, Otsego, Putnam, and Tioga counties, as they are not members of a Continuum of Care and therefore do not collect data.
- <sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *2009 Homeless Populations and Subpopulations*.
- <sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *HUD's 2009 CoC Homeless Assistance Programs—Housing Inventory Chart Report*.
- <sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *2009 Homeless Populations and Subpopulations*; U.S. Census Bureau, 2006–2008 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates.
- <sup>6</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2006–2008 American Community Survey.
- <sup>7</sup> David Levinson, ed., *Encyclopedia of Homelessness* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2004).
- <sup>8</sup> New York City Mayor's Office of Operations, *The Mayor's Management Report Fiscal 2010*, September 2010.
- <sup>9</sup> New York City Department of Homeless Services, "DHS Unveils Reform Package Centering on Work and Self-Sufficiency," <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dhs/html/press/pr042507.shtml>
- <sup>10</sup> New York City Department of Homeless Services, "Advantage," [http://www.nyc.gov/html/dhs/html/rent/advntNY\\_about.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dhs/html/rent/advntNY_about.shtml)
- <sup>11</sup> City advocates estimate that the rate at which participating Advantage families are returning to shelter could be as high as one in three. In addition, a July 2010 audit of Work Advantage housing indicates that DHS does not provide adequate oversight and that poor housing conditions exist in city-subsidized apartments. Coalition for the Homeless, "Advantage Recidivism—The Real Numbers," <http://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/blog/entry/advantage-recidivism-the-real-numbers>; New York City Office of the Comptroller, *Audit Report on the Monitoring of the Work Advantage Program by the Department of Homeless Services*, July 15, 2010.
- <sup>12</sup> Greta Guarton (Executive Director, Long Island Coalition for the Homeless), interview with ICPH, September 2010; Long Island Coalition for the Homeless, <http://www.nsch.org>
- <sup>13</sup> William O'Connell (Executive Director, Homeless Alliance of Western New York), interview with ICPH, September 2010.